(b) and (c) Question do not arise, in view of reply (a) above.

Illegal Mines

3630. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the number of illegal mines in the country has increased recently;

(b) if so, what are the steps taken by Government for closure of illegal mines, which is causing threat to environment and the dwelling communities; and

(c) the number of cases filed against illegal miners and the details of action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI B. K. HANDIQUE): (a) to (c) As per the provisions of the Mines & Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act, 1957) no mining operations can be undertaken without a valid mining lealse granted under the Act and the rules framed thereunder. Instances of illegal mining come to the notice of Government from time to time. State Governments have been empowered under section 23C of the MMDR Act to frame rules for prevention of illegal mining, transportation of minerals etc. The Central Government has also directed State Governments to constitute task forces at State/District level for prevention of illegal mining and furnish quarterly returns on illegal mining for review by Ministry of Mines. As per available information for the period from 01.7.2005 to 31.12.2007, 85264 cases of illegal mining of major/minor minerals have been detected. 1907 FIRs have been lodged and 15203 court cases have been filed in the matter, out of which 12408 cases have been decided and a total of Rs. 166.08 crores has been realized as fine. State Governments have also seized the illegally mined minerals, machinery used therein, and auctioned/compounded the same to recover rent, royalty or taxes under Section 21(5) of the MMDR Act, 1957.

Notification of Mineral Prices by Indian Bureau of Mines

3631. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) notifies the average price of minerals each months, based on which the State Governments collects royalty from the lessees;

(b) whether it is also a fact that since May, 2007, no month-wise price has been notified by IBM, with the result that State Governments are unable to assess/collect exact royalty from the lessees for a particular month in time; and

(c) if so, whether Government would ensure that in future the average price of minerals is published every month in time, to avoid complication of reassessment and collection/ adjustment of different royalty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI B. K. HANDIQUE): (a) Indian Bureau of Mines publishes State wise average values of non-atomic and non fuel minerals other than aluminium (bauxite and laterite dispatched for use in alumina and aluminium metal extraction), primary gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, nickel and tin after collecting relevant data based on which royalty is charged on *ad-valorem* basis for each month.